Training and Certification Programs for Pilot Vehicle Drivers in Atlantic Canada

Background and Options

Discussion Paper
April 2003

Preface:

This discussion paper has been prepared for the purposes of presenting background information and possible issues for consideration in the development of strategies for training of drivers of pilot vehicles which accompany overdimensional vehicles and loads within Atlantic Canada.

It should be recognized that the document is offered solely for the purposes of supporting discussion, and at this point, has not been endorsed by any of the governments within Atlantic Canada.

Request for Comments

This document attempts to outline issues, options and implications related to training and possible certification of pilot vehicle drivers.

Comments on the information provided and on the approach which should be pursued within Atlantic Canada would be both welcomed and greatly appreciated.

Comments should be provided by June 9, 2003 to one of the following contacts:

New Brunswick:
Mr. Denis Goguen,
Trucking Policy, Transportation Policy Branch,
New Brunswick Dept. of Transportation
P.O. Box 6000, King's Place,
Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1
Tel. (506) 453-2802 Fax:(506) 453-3701
Email: Denis.GOGUEN@gnb.ca

Nova Scotia:
Mr. Don Stonehouse,
Manager, Transportation Policy Development,
Nova Scotia Dept. of Transportation & Public Works,
P.O. Box 186, 1672 Granville St
Halifax, NS B3J 2N2
Tel: (902) 424-2490 Fax: (902) 424-1163
Email: STONEHDO@gov.ns.ca

Prince Edward Island:
Mr. Wilfred MacDonald,
Highway Safety Division,
PEI Dept. of Transportation & Public Works,
33 Riverside Drive, Box 2000
Charlottetown, PEI C1A 7N8
Tel: (902) 368-5222 Fax: (902) 368-5236
Email: wjmacdonald@gov.pe.ca

Newfoundland:
Mr. Tom Beckett,
Deputy Registrar, Motor Registration Division,
Newfoundland Government Services and Lands,
Box 8710, 149 Smallwood Drive,
Mt. Pearl, Nfld., A1B 4J6
Tel: (709) 729-2520 Fax: (709) 729-6955
Email: BeckettT@gov.nf.ca

Context:

In the course of public meetings held in early 2002, a number of stakeholders in Atlantic Canada expressed interest in, or support for, developing training programs for drivers of pilot vehicles which are used to assist in the safe movement of oversize loads on public highways. It was also proposed by some that governments should introduce requirements for certification of pilot vehicle drivers, based on approved training programs and appropriate examination criteria.

A. Review of Current Practices:

No formal training or certification programs for pilot vehicle drivers currently exist in Canadian jurisdictions. Alberta Transportation publishes and makes available an information booklet on the role and responsibilities of pilot vehicle drivers, but does not currently require driver certification. In the private sector, internal training programs or policies have been developed by several individual companies (eg. trucking firms and pilot car services).

Several (currently 8) US states have some form of certification requirement for pilot vehicle drivers.

- Three states (Florida, Washington and Utah) require drivers to successfully complete a formal training program (typically a one-day course) as a condition of the certification process. In these states the training programs are offered by "third" party training organizations such as colleges or safety councils. North Carolina will be introducing a training/certification program in mid-2003, using a training program and examination process to be offered by the Department of Transportation.

- Certification requirements in the other 5 states typically involve passing a short test which is administered by a state government department (eg, Dept of Transportation or Motor Vehicles). Some states issue certificates based on applicants meeting specific criteria for age, class of driving license, driving record and completion of an approved Defensive Driving Course.

Reciprocal recognition of credentials issued by other states is not automatic, and at this point, is rather limited.

B. Considerations

- Introduction of pilot vehicle driver certification requirements in Atlantic Canada would require new regulations to be introduced in an area that is not currently regulated.

- If pilot vehicle driver certification programs were to be introduced in Atlantic Canada, careful and close coordination between governments within the region and with neighbouring provinces and states would be particularly critical to avoid introducing new and unnecessary regulatory impediments to interprovincial trucking.
    - Based on the US experience, while several states have developed excellent training materials and certification programs, there appear to be potential conflicts in the requirements of different states, and limited reciprocal recognition of pilot vehicle driver credentials.

- Development of training and guidance materials for pilot vehicle drivers in Atlantic Canada could draw on the content of publications and training programs developed elsewhere.

- Preparation of training and guidance materials does not necessarily have to be accompanied by a driver certification program.

Training of Pilot Vehicle Drivers in Atlantic Canada – Possible Options

The interest which has been expressed in developing training programs for pilot car drivers appears to be based on two key objectives:

- improving highway safety by ensuring that pilot vehicle drivers have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities and are trained in best practices for situations which can arise in assisting the movement of overdimensional loads, and

- improving the consistency and quality of commercially available pilot vehicle services available to the trucking industry

From a public policy perspective, options that might be considered to contribute to these objectives would include:

Option 1 - Develop and Distribute a Guidebook for Pilot Vehicle Drivers

Governments in Atlantic Canada, with assistance from industry experts, could develop and publish a common "guidebook" which would contain clear information on the role and responsibilities of pilot vehicle drivers during movement of overdimensional vehicles and loads. Testing and certification of drivers would not necessarily have to accompany this approach. (Example – Alberta)

Implications:

- Consensus would need to be developed among governments on the role and responsibilities of pilot vehicle drivers
    - legislative or regulatory changes may be required by governments, particularly with respect to the role of pilot vehicle drivers in traffic control
- The role and responsibilities of pilot vehicles would be clarified for industry and other road users
- A directly relevant information resource would be available to current and new pilot vehicle drivers in Atlantic Canada
- There would be no additional driver licensing administrative cost implications for governments
- There would be no direct cost implications for pilot vehicle drivers or trucking companies
- Without driver certification requirements, recognition of driver credentials from other jurisdictions is not impacted

Option 2 - Establish Pilot Vehicle Driver Certification Requirement Based on Guidebook

With successful completion of a standard driver's guidebook (as described in Option 1), governments in Atlantic Canada could require pilot vehicle drivers to successfully complete a test on the information contained in the guide. Certification could either take the form of a certificate issued by an appropriate agency (Example – New York State), or an endorsement on a driver's license.

Implications:

- As in Option 1, consensus would need to be developed among governments on the role and responsibilities of pilot vehicle drivers and policy or regulatory changes may be required, particularly with respect to the role of pilot vehicles in traffic control
- Successful completion of a test on the materials contained in the Guidebook for Pilot Vehicle Drivers would provide greater assurance that pilot vehicle drivers have an understanding of their role and responsibilities
- Governments would have to establish testing programs and administrative tracking procedures (eg. license endorsement or certificate, renewal period and process etc)
- Pilot vehicle drivers would incur the costs associated with taking the test (initially and on periodic

renewal)

- Arrangements would have to be established with jurisdictions outside Atlantic Canada to either:
  - Recognize pilot vehicle driver credentials held by other Canadian or US drivers, and/or
  - Provide ready access to the testing and certification process for pilot vehicle drivers from outside the Atlantic region

Option 3 - Establish and Mandate Formal Driver Training and Certification Requirements

A comprehensive course curriculum and training program could be developed and made a mandatory requirement for pilot vehicle drivers. This course could be delivered by government agencies or through third parties such as Safety Councils. (Examples - Washington, Florida and Utah). Consideration may also be given to requiring drivers to complete a Defensive Driving Course and a Traffic Flagging course, either as part of the training program or as prerequisites to taking the training.

Implications:

- Introduction of mandatory training and certification would provide the highest level of assurance that pilot vehicle drivers are prepared to deal with the challenges and public safety concerns associated with movement of overdimensional loads
- Development of a comprehensive mandatory training program carries startup and ongoing cost implications for both government and industry:
  - Development and ongoing maintenance of the course curriculum and training materials
  - Training of "trainers"
  - Tuition fees and time to take the course (typically 1 or 2 days), both initially and at renewal intervals
  - Administrative costs associated with tracking driver and trainer credentials
- Governments would have to introduce new legislation and/or regulations to require driver training and certification
- Careful consideration of the implications of such policies for pilot vehicle drivers from outside Atlantic Canada would be required (eg. reciprocity of credentials, access to approved training etc)